

PARIS-SAIGON—PERHAPS

Will There be a Claimant for the £17,000 Prize in the Race to French Indo-China and Back?



Both Goelands are already out of the race. This (left) is one, with its crew—Michelette (W/T. operator), Arnoux and Japy (pilots). On the right is the Breguet Fulgur.

THE three all-French entries for the 14,700 miles French Aero Club race, "toed the line" at Le Bourget Airport last Sunday. A large crowd had assembled when MM. Challe and Brill took off, at 6 a.m., flying a Caudron Goeland with two supercharged 250 h.p. inverted six-cylinder air-cooled Renault engines, giving a cruising speed of about 175 m.p.h. at 6,500ft. The range is over 1,800 miles carrying 1,200 litres (approx. 260 gallons) of petrol, and the total weight, 7,710lb.

Some two minutes later Japy and Arnoux took the air on another Goeland, with two normally aspirated, six-cylinder Renault engines of 220 h.p. The cruising speed in this case is about 162 m.p.h. Weight and range differ little from the above. These two aircraft are of the low-wing cantilever type fitted with flaps and retractable undercarriages.

The third and last aircraft to take off, a Breguet Fulgur, flown by Detroyot and Durmon, is powered by two supercharged Gnome et Rhone, K14 No. (950 h.p.) fourteen-cylinder, two row, radial air-cooled engines, rated at 6,000ft. A fuel capacity of 3,500 litres (approx. 770 gallons) gives a range of about 1,250 miles at a cruising speed of 206 m.p.h. The maximum speed is given as 240 m.p.h. The construction is

all-metal monocoque, as compared with the rectangular, plywood-covered internally braced Goeland fuselages. The total weight of the Fulgur is 18,960lb.

The Air France Mediterranean route was followed via Athens, then across Persia to the control at Baghdad. The normal air route was taken to Karachi, the next control point; and from there via Calcutta, Rangoon, and Bangkok to Saigon in Indo-China, where a compulsory forty-eight hours' rest was to be made with aircraft under lock and key, except for four consecutive hours allowed for repairs. An extra twenty-four hours may be granted in case of night take-off.

Japy and Arnoux, the leaders, were forced to retire at Karachi on Monday with a damaged wing, due to undercarriage failure. The Fulgur, proceeding after a forced landing for petrol at Corinth, left Baghdad at 1.36 p.m. on Monday, MM. Challe and Brill hoped to restart on their Goeland on Tuesday.

Objets d'art and 1,800,000 francs (over £17,000) prize money are offered, while the winning machine (if any—the early troubles suggest a complete fiasco before the race has run its course) will be bought by the French Air Ministry for 1,200,000 francs if the owners wish.

LORD NUFFIELD'S CASE

LORD NUFFIELD'S statement, made last Thursday, on his difference of opinion with the Air Ministry has already received such wide publicity that there seems little need to repeat it in full here, but a brief summary of his chief points may be found useful for reference in conjunction with the leading article on page 427.

Lord Nuffield's statement, which included the reading of correspondence, showed that from time to time, following the inception of the Wolseley aero engine factory in 1929, attempts were made to interest the Air Ministry, but to no avail.

In July, 1935, Lord Nuffield sought an interview with Lord Swinton (then Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister), the Air Minister. Lord Swinton, in reply, gave his reasons—business in the House, committee work, etc.—for not being able to see Lord Nuffield on the day suggested, but indicated no alternative date.

At a later date, however, Lord Nuffield was requested to see Lord Weir—acting as adviser to the Air Ministry in connection with the expansion—and Lord Swinton. He offered to do anything he could in the interests of the country, stating that at his own expense he would obtain designs for and manufacture a well-known and approved American type of aero engine or the Bristol engine in order to augment equally the supplies of aero engines. This offer was not accepted.

Lord Nuffield, in his statement, then turned to "This shadow scheme."

"Right from the beginning," he stated, "I was against this scheme because in precision engineering of the nature involved in aero engine manufacture unity of control, in my judgment,

is essential, and as a practical engineer I could not see this shadow scheme developing with the efficiency and speed that are essential.

"My contention always has been that this shadow scheme is not a scheme that would be satisfactory. It is sufficiently difficult to make aero engines in one factory alone. What will be the result of making engines in parts in seven factories, I really do not know.

"It is not a workable scheme, and this is one of my reasons for not coming in. My main reason is that I have already an aero engine factory and they do not seem to think that I am fit for it.

"Anxious to help, however, I offered to build 2,000 Bristol engines in the Wolseley aero engine factory. I want to emphasise that there was no haggling over any question of price, as I see has been suggested recently.

"I offered to build these engines at the price the Air Ministry were then paying, so that there could be no question of excess profit or anything of that order. This offer was turned down."

Lord Nuffield went on to say that apparently the Air Ministry next wished him to come into the scheme by putting up a new factory at Government expense, though he already had an aero engine factory standing there doing nothing.

Finally, Lord Nuffield's lengthy statement dealt with the closing down of the Wolseley aero engine plant, and a telephone call to the Air Ministry on August 26 last informing them that the cessation was taking place. The very next morning, alleged Lord Nuffield, a request to tender for 300 Wolseley engines was received.